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AN ESSAY  
AT  
DEER HUNTING



BY J. N. KIMBALL



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# AN ESSAY

AT

## DEER HUNTING

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J. N. KIMBALL

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Did you ever go gadding about after the brown-eyed deer in the deep recesses of his native wood? If not then you have missed some things which will come into your life in no other way, believe me.

I have hunted more or less all my days now for one thing and now for another as the case happened to be. Nearly all these hunts have been made with but one single object in view, something to eat, so when I was invited to search for the festive buck in his woodland wilds I thought that having the same objective point, something to eat, I was well fitted by long experience for the job. I am a good hunter, if I do say it myself, and whether it be in chasing the elusive collar-button from its lair in the dingy caves under the lower berth of a sleeping car, or in digging and delving for the meaning of a sloppy and slipshod outline in the giddy whirl of some shorthand turkey-trot, so far as hunting goes, I am willing to give almost anyone cards and spades and little casino and wager my salary on winning the game.

And right here I want to call your attention to the fact that this essay has to do with hunting only and that it has

nothing at all in common with another and similar essay which I am planning to write upon the subject of finding. Hunting and finding are two totally different things as my experience with collar-buttons and shorthand notes long ago taught me. If no mention of finding anything is made in these pages please bear in mind that it in no way detracts from the value of this essay as an essay, in fact to my mind it adds to its beauty because it shows that I am doing my best to stick to my text and not go wandering about, losing the thread of my discourse and hopping from one subject to another just for the sake of a change, like a spider on a hot stove. No, you will please note that this essay from start to finish follows the lines laid down in the title and there are a good many writers who might profit by following my example.

And that brings me to another point which is that the printer made an error when he set up the title in type; he spelled it all right and he made three lines of it just as I told him to do but for some reason best known to himself he made the second line so small that you have to put your glasses on when you look for it, although it is the most important word in the whole outfit and should have been set in big, black letters, like the scare head of a divorce trial in a yellow journal. I feel obliged to call attention to this as otherwise I would be deluged with letters from kind friends and some people who are not so kind—a very different kind, in fact,—all of whom would write me long and dreary epistles tending to show that I had misled them into reading an essay *on* deer hunting whereas they found

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nothing which was of any great help to them in that respect. That is not it at all, this is an essay *at* deer hunting made by myself, and this explanation ought to make everything serene. And right here, if any other error is found in these pages it is also the printer's error, not mine; that is what I pay the printer for, to make errors, or at least to take the blame for any that are made. Having made this plain I will now resume the thread of my tale which has become a little twisted by the duty imposed upon me of setting you right at the start.

When the leaves on the trees begin to change from livid green to rainbow tints and mountain and valley revel in all the hues of the painter's palette; when I can look at the hills through half-closed lids and imagine myself gazing with rapture on Turner's famous painting of "The Shipwreck;" when the corn is cut and gathered into little stacks like Indian tepees and the fields where they stand look like home-made quilts, with patches of brown earth, green stubble and bright yellow pumpkins; when the wild goose honks at me in the early morn and the black duck makes his call on me at eventide; when the piping tenor of the little frogs and the deep bass of the bulls sound their chorus all through the lonely night from the edge of every pond and marsh; when all these things happen and some others which I cannot now recall, I feel an intense desire hard to define and often harder still to gratify, a longing which is akin to an instinct and yet one which will not be denied; it is the call of the wild and when I hear it I know it is up to me to go into the attic and get out my gun.

I have made so many mistakes in my life that I feel it my duty to warn others against making them and for that reason I want to put you right on one point as regards hunting. Before I set out on the trip the results of which are recorded in this essay, a bosom friend said to me: "I am glad you are going to take a few days off and know you will have a fine time, but I shall not cry if you do not shoot anything;" his name is Wolfe and you can see very plainly why he is afraid of firearms. And my stenographer said: "You need the outing very much and I am sure it will do you good, but I do hope you will not kill anything." It seems to me that those people were a trifle selfish and one-sided for if they read the newspapers they know that about as many hunters are shot each year as deer and yet all their sympathy was wasted on wild animals; I did not get any of it and all the time I was really the one that was in the greatest danger. Not every man who goes into the wildwood does so with an insane desire in his heart to kill things, that is not it at all; most men are like myself in that respect I think, they enjoy hunting for itself and entirely separate and apart from the fact that something may or may not be killed. To be sure it is the habit of every man who goes hunting to carry a gun but that is because it is a part of the game as it has come down to us from the remote past. Of course one could hunt without firearms, just as one could go to the theatre without his shirt if he wanted to, but he does not simply because he falls in with the rules laid down by what is known as "good society," and for the same sort of reason when he goes into the



woods he takes a gun. Then again, a gun adds weight to the scheme in more ways than one; one weigh for example is about ten pounds and another way—well, have it any way you wish, it is all the same to me.

A gun is supposed to be the first necessity in deer hunting, but that is not so, it is really a secondary matter as you will see. When I was a lad I could stroll off into the wood-lot down back of the house and blaze away all day, if I saw fit, at any four-legged or two-legged thing that could by any stretch of the imagination be called game; but it is not like that at present, not by a long shot. From start to finish it has all been changed and you have to go at it in a different way. In the first place you have to start hunting before you go hunting, as you might say, for you have to hunt up the address of a fellow called a "game warden" and who is boss of the state which you intend to invade. My happy hunting ground was to be in New Hampshire and so I was obliged to hunt for the name of the chap who owns that state. When I found who he was I wrote him a letter; it was a nice letter, I will say that much about it, it was a real, good, kindly sort of an epistle for I knew there was no use trying to put up any bluff on the boss. I asked him in the most touching way if he would let me in on his domain for a few days and he said he would. He did not say it just that way because I suppose he was pressed for time, or maybe his typist was out to lunch. If I remember rightly the answer I got was short and to the point, "Ten dollars please and be quick about it." He was on the job all right, there is not the least

doubt about that, take it from me if there is any man who knows his business from Dan to Beersheba, it is that same game warden. I had those ten plunks laid by for other uses but not seeing any way to get out of it I sent them to him with my regrets, feeling sure that I should never see them any more and I was right, I have not. Then he wrote again and asked me some rather impertinent questions, or so it seemed to me—about how old I was and how it came to pass I had been allowed to live so long; how much hair I had and what sort of dye I was using on it; what kind of a moustache I wore on week days and did I have the same one on Sunday; what was the ordinary color of my optics and was I crosseyed; was I tall or short and if so how much. I looked in the mirror and answered all those questions as best I could and then he sent me a lot of rules and things which showed me that I had never been anything but a mere amateur, as it were, in the hunting business. If it ever comes to you to try to learn shorthand on the one hand or to attempt to master the game laws of any of our states on the other, take my advice and go for shorthand; you will get through with the job quicker and it will pay you better. But it was up to me to master those rules or put a curb on my desire to roam in the forest glades and so I went at them.

I found that my ten-dollar ante gave me that game warden's permission to carry a gun and under certain conditions to use it. If a duck got gay with me between the hours of sunrise and sundown I could punish him as I thought fit, or at any rate according to my skill; but if that

duck were wise and chose to call me names between the pink twilight and the gray dawn, all I could do would be to answer him in his own language, I was not allowed to resort to extreme measures. Something of the same kind was said about squirrels; if I remember it rightly, a red one could sit on the limb of a tree, hoist his bushy tail over his back and abuse me most shamefully, and so far as I was concerned there was nothing for him to be afraid of; but if his fur were gray he was my meat, supposing all the time that I could hit him; he had the privilege of dodging and used it. I was allowed to waste all the powder I wanted to on blue jays and hawks and crows, but was not to snap a cap at an eagle under severe pains and penalties. What do you think of that? Who wants a crow anyhow! As for deer, the real object of my search, there was Section 5 and Article 7 and subhead 10 and so on, and there were exceptions to every other line. In one county I was not to even squint at a deer except during the first week in December while in another I might gaze at him free and untrammelled from November 1 until December 15. I chose this last county simply because, as I reasoned it out, I was more likely to have luck if I took six weeks at it than I would be if I only took six days. Laws are funny things don't you think? For instance, in one county, on the last day of November you may be sitting on a cushion of moss and pine needles with your back against a tree smoking the pipe of peace and in love with all the world, when along comes a deer who does not like your looks, he thinks you are some green thing maybe, and tries to bite you, but have

you any right to protect yourself? Not on your life; it is for you to run or to shin to the top of a tree and stay there harking to the merry ha-ha of that short-tailed reprobate until he gets tired and starts off to find somebody else to spring that joke upon. But let that deer try the same game the next day and he will find he is up against something entirely different and that his name is Dennis. From all this you might make up your mind that one should wait until December 1 in all such counties and the reasoning would be sound were it not for the fact that in these days every farmer in the country gets a brewery calendar sent to him, depending on the brand he uses, and in some way those deer get sight of it. It must be so, for I have never heard of a deer trying to bite a man during the season when the law allows the man to retaliate; maybe the animals have some sort of wireless system which spreads the news, but at any rate I am prepared to make affidavit that the facts are as I have stated them.

There was another thing that game warden sent me and after I learned my catechism I examined it. It was a yellow slip of paper with coupons attached, all bearing the seal of the great commonwealth I was about to lay waste and which permitted me, if I would abide by the catechism, to lug my gun about as natural as anything and in case of a great streak of luck to send home two deer or parts of two if I liked and a certain number of game birds. I never used those coupons, not because I did not want to use them or because I had any deep-seated grudge against using them but for other and maybe better reasons. They gave

me to understand that I could send home a lot of Wilson's snipe, but I never set eyes on any of Mr. Wilson's poultry and came back home with the idea that he never had any. And they allowed me to cut off at an early age a certain number of partridges, woodcock and quail, if I would be careful to see that "such hunting and killing is done in a manner provided by law and in accordance with the laws of this state." Not being a lawyer and not having at hand Chapter 38 of the laws of 1905, and for certain other reasons which I do not care to talk about just now, I refrained from partridges, woodcock and quail; as regards the last two I refrained so hard that I did not even look at any. And to finish with that yellow thing, I was ordered to wear it upon my person at all hours of the day and night and to produce it and show it at any time and to any person who wanted to look at it, without regard to age, sex, color or previous condition of servitude; all of which is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and I have that paper to show as Exhibit 10 of this date; it was called a license but in my case there was no need for the second syllable.

Everything was now in order and I had my license; it cost me ten dollars which I really think was more than it was worth and just at a time when I had other uses for the cash, but to offset that a friend kindly offered me the use of his rifle. I accepted it gladly, more than gladly, in fact, for the gun dealer wanted twenty-five silver cartwheels for the same thing. Then I was told to invest some more good money in two hundred cartridges and not know-

ing any better I did it; I did not weigh the things but I lugged them something like a million miles and I feel sure that I am telling the truth when I say offhand that they weighed more than ten pounds. My next lesson was in the form of a request to take each one of those cartridges and roll it up carefully in cotton, and I did it with the idea that as they had cost a good deal it was wise to take care of them, just as you wrap unset gems in tissue paper, but after I had finished the job I was told that I was wrong and that it was to prevent the deer from hearing them jingle in my pocket along with my small change. Right here I began to get a trifle shy for I thought that if I had to chase an animal all over the Green Mountains that was so mighty sensitive about noises as that, I might as well quit before I began; I said as much but was told that it was up to me to be a sport and not to get cold feet. With the thermometer at ten degrees below zero I tried to figure out how those loose ends of mine were going to keep hot, but I was wise enough not to say anything about it. There were other hints that I received, in fact I was filled so full of points that I must have looked like a porcupine. I can remember some of them, but I have neither the space nor the desire and so am not going to inflict them upon you; if you ever start out on a similar quest you will get them fired at you, for it is the regular thing, all of which I learned later.

Now behold me all fixed up with rifle, cartridges and that yellow thing I have told you about, the mercury monkeying with the zero mark and me sitting close to the stove until my companion hitched the horse into the buggy; there was

about four inches of snow on the ground but not enough to make good sleighing so we went on wheels. When all was ready I took my cargo of arms and stuff out and placed it in the buggy and was about to get in myself when I was chased back into the house for what seemed to me to be a very stupid reason until it was explained. Just before I left New York I went into Macy's and took a look at the sporting goods. I had a very nice chat with the young lady behind the counter and casually told her that I was "going into the woods to shoot a few deer." She seemed pleased to know it and proceeded to show me something in the shape of a sheepskin vest, tanned a bright yellow on the outside and with the fur on the inside to keep me warm. I did not need that vest but I bought it because my conscience pricked me. I had told the young woman that I was going to shoot a few deer when I really did not know whether I should or not—shoot them, that is, and I got even with my conscience and also with the damsel by investing five ninety-eight reduced from six twenty-three in that sheepskin vest. I had it on when I tried to get into the buggy that first day and was ordered back into the house to cover it up with a red sweater. I objected but my companion said, "You would not last more than ten seconds in the woods if anybody saw you; that vest is just the color of a deer and somebody would shoot you sure." Rather than become a target for all the fools in New Hampshire I took his advice of course, and put on the sweater. Then he fetched out a bright red hat which made me look for all the world like a cardinal of the Catholic Church and he

made me put it on because as he said, "If anybody sees that gray cap of yours over the top of a bush he will slap it full of holes." Again I ate humble pie and put on the red thing simply because that gray cap cost me one dollar and fifteen cents and I did not want it made into a sieve. Then my companion did me up in coats and shawls and mittens and things until I had more wrappings than an Egyptian mummy and we started off.

We drove for a few miles, that is to say he did for I am no driver myself, then a few more miles and so on. I was cold and the exposed parts of my skeleton, such as my nose and my fingers, were aware of the fact, the former froze so hard that I could not blow it and the latter might as well have been left at home; they were of no use to me. I remembered the advice that I had received from my companion about not getting cold feet and kept that part of my troubles to myself hard as it was to do it, especially when I recalled the fact that there was not an undertaker within fifty miles and I could not for the life of me see what they were going to do with the corpse. But things were not quite so bad as they looked; we finally drove up to an empty house and barn which stood back from the road and in the center of a wilderness of mountain and valley; then we got out of the buggy, at least my companion did and I tried to but had to give it up and ask him to kindly remove the covers and to look and see if I had not left my feet at the farm by mistake. The feet were there all right, although I should have doubted anything but my eyes, and I then tried to have him go back into the barn and look for a der-



overshoes weighing seven pounds each and I did that too—they were all right going down hill because all I had to do was to push them out and let them fall but the lifting of those boots over mountains a thousand miles high was a weary task; nobody said anything about taking along an extra supply of wind and it was a serious oversight for that was the one thing I needed above all else. What little breath I had kept slipping from me in an alarming manner and in order to renew my stock I seated myself on the trunk of a fallen tree, until I could get enough oxygen for the rest of the climb and lit my pipe. I had been told that a deer can smell things farther than any other animal in creation—it may be so but all the same it will be a long day before I quit smoking just to please any old deer; if he does not like the smell he can move.

Down in the valley the trees had been cut off and the bleak November wind had full sweep; it frosted my nose, bit my ears, robbed me of the use of my fingers and made me cry. By degrees, however, the rugged work of climbing set the heart to pumping the blood with such frantic speed that my ears and nose and fingers were soon as warm as those of the people sitting before the open fireplace in the cozy kitchen in the old farmhouse. I rested long enough to get my lungs into working order then I resumed my march upwards. About half way to the top, where the old growth of timber still remained and towered eighty feet above the cushion of moss and leaves, I found that I needed some more breath and another smoke and so I sat down again. There was never a sound save now and then the

rubbing of one tree against another or the sighs and groans of some old monarch of the forest as it swayed to and fro in the wind. It was deathly still and as the minutes went by the silence seemed to increase until I could plainly hear the ticking of my watch and the pumping of my heart, when all of a sudden, *what was that?* It gave me a start as any sound gives one a start in the middle of a thick and silent wood; tap, tap, tap. I could not repress a smile when it came to me that it was but the pecking of a woodpecker against the body of a dead and hollow tree; it is a common enough sound in the woods, but here, with all my nerves on edge, it made my bristles rise. I peered about carefully and was soon able to locate the bird and to watch him as he tapped the old and decayed stump and dodged around it from one side to the other in search of food.

It is queer how the mind will work in such a place and what slight causes will dig up some incident from the forgotten depths of the long ago. From where I sat I could look over the broad expanse of more than one county and miles away in the distance, flashing brightly in the sunlight, lay a body of water I knew very well, Mascoma Lake. That lake was the scene of an event the memory of which had been dead for many a long year, but which came back strongly and vividly when I heard the tapping of that woodpecker and was something like this:

It was more than half a century ago and the stage setting was a very small village lying along the shore of that lake, a village of hardly a score of houses. It was a fine day in summer; the birds were singing on every bough, the hay

rick; he complained that I wanted him to do all the hard work and refused. After a while I managed to reach the ground, but will not trouble you with the details as to how I did it, for this yarn is melancholy enough without them and I do not want you to shed tears until you get to the right place; then I toddled along as best I could until I stood in the door of the old barn. Cold as I was I could not help expressing my admiration; at my feet flowed a little river, now in calm pools and frothy back waters and now leaping and tumbling over boulders and making miniature torrents, trying to rival larger streams with its noise and serving as the bottom of a frame through which I saw piled one above the other, hill after hill and mountain after mountain, while away in the distance were snow-capped Cardigan and Ascutney on the one side and the shining peaks of the White Mountains on the other. I would have stayed right there and have frozen to death while I enjoyed it if I had been allowed to do so, but having seen the horse warmly housed my companion told me I would do well to take off my overcoat and leave it in the buggy. I had my doubts about it, but being as cold as I thought it possible to be at the time I judged that the removal of one or two of my outer skins would not make any difference as I could not be any colder anyhow so I peeled off the coat. Then he aimed a finger at a mountain some half a mile or more to the left and remarked in an easy sort of way, "You go up to the top of that and then down into the valley on the other side and up on top of a hill you will find behind it and if you have good luck you may run across some fresh

deer tracks in the snow; if you do then just follow them and if you jump a deer keep after him until you get him if you have to go a hundred miles." All this was plain enough; I told him I would do so if I lived through it and started off. He called me back to get my gun. I did not really see why I should need that gun but after thinking it over the idea struck me that maybe it would sound better in the newspapers if I were "found dead with his trusty rifle by his side," than if I were simply "frozen stark and stiff and lying like a log in the snow," so I took it up and off I went.

I crossed the little river on a shaky foot bridge, but it was no foot bridge for me, not much; my cranial makeup is adorned with one big bump loaded to the muzzle with the trait of caution and that bump suggested that a meek and prayerful attitude was more suited to my years and that I was never cut out for the star part in a tight-rope-walking stunt, and I took the hint; I am not ashamed of it and I would do the same thing again. Having gotten across I proceeded on my way and as I went on my spirits and my temperature both rose; the latter went up so fast that I would have been willing to peel off more skins if there had been any place to put the peelings where I could have found them again. I reached the foot of the first mountain and began to climb; it was "going up" and no mistake about it. Right here I found the advice that had been given me was lacking on one point; I was told to carry twenty pounds of gun and things and I did it; I was told that as extra covering for my feet I should wear a pair of

makers were making music in the fields and the bees were flitting from blossom to blossom in search of their winter's store of honey. And the hero? Me! Behold that hero, in all the dignity of his first trousers, a mite of a chap who had not lived long enough in the world to have become tired of its good things, a short half dozen years at the most, and with all a small boy's love for the out-of-doors.

My father worked as a cabinet maker in a small shop at the edge of the lake where it had been dammed for power. Out of the lake ran a little river which to my childish eyes looked like a roaring torrent and to my mind was equal to if not larger than the Mississippi. Where the lake became a river was what is called a "flume," a sort of huge wooden trough by which the water was directed against the wheel that gave the power which ran the machinery in the shop. The water in the flume was deep and flowed swiftly and a strong man would have found it difficult to breast the current if he had fallen into it.

On the day of which I speak, and which had now become so distinct in my memory, I asked my mother if I could go down and watch my father at his work in the shop. She readily gave her consent but told me to keep away from the water and I promised her I would do so; but it had a charm for me much stronger than anything inside the four walls of the shop, and a fishing-pole and line which had been left standing beside the building by some fisherman gave an added temptation. I forgot my promise, caught a grasshopper, baited the hook and set out for the flume. I crept away out to the end of the timber until my little legs

dangled over the edge and but a little way above the rushing water, dropped my line into the current and waited to see what would come next. Something came, all right, but it was not just what I was looking for; I heard my father asking in the kindest and softest tone if I had caught anything and the next thing I remember is being grabbed by the back of the neck and landed across his knee. He answered his own question for I "caught something" sure enough and the sound that echoed back from the forest on the other side of the lake was just like those taps I was hearing now against the hollow tree, tap, tap, tap, only in my case they came by dozens instead of threes. I also remember that in the railroad station, over on the other side of the lake and half a mile away, people said that they heard the same sound and from it they formed the opinion that I was getting just what was good for me. It seems they had seen me in my perilous position and by means of signs had warned someone in the shop that I was there and my father came out and did the rest. It was plenty as I recall it and it taught me that if I went fishing in the company of some older person I would catch more fish and less of other things. It must have been a rather sizable experience to have remained thus rooted in my memory for half a century, but it came back to my mind that day as I sat there in the wood and I saw every detail connected with it as plainly as though I were looking at the movies.

And again the distant lake called up other memories of that same far-gone time. By its side, and I could see it from my perch, is a little brick school-house which has not

changed one single iota since the time my bare feet swung from one of its benches and I faced with a great deal of awe the student from Darmouth College who one winter came down to teach our young ideas how to shoot. At the close of the term we had an old-fashioned "spelling bee" in which almost every person in the village, pupils and parents alike, stood in line and each was spelled down, one after the other, the sole remaining disciple of Noah Webster getting a prize. That teacher is dead and has been dead for many years, but I have the greatest possible affection for his memory because at that time he placed me, five or six years of age, next to the best speller in the outfit and at the end of the line. When any of the hard words came our way they had to get by the good speller before they hit me and he was equal to the task so that I always started with a new word, an easy one like cat, or dog, or hen. I stood the test all right until but two of us were left standing, the good speller and I. There was no way of getting ahead of him and I had to quit, but I still have a kind regard for the man who so adapted the words to my infant mind as to make me come out second in that, my first contest.

These things came back to me while I was trying to get my bellows into working order again. When I found that I was able to let go of one breath and grab hold of another without making a noise like the safety-valve on an engine I started on and nearly reached the top of the first hill when I came across a fresh deer-track in the snow and it made me so nervous that I had to sit down and con over my

orders. I had been told that if I found any tracks I should follow them until I jumped the deer so I leaned my gun against a tree and tried the jumping act. The best I could do, so far as I could measure it with my eye, was about twenty-four inches and how the dickens I ever managed to jump that far with those things on my feet is a mystery to me even now. I tried it two or three times and after thinking it all over I finally decided that if there was any jumping of deer to be done in that county it would have to be done by somebody else; I never was a good jumper anyhow, so I judged I would have to omit that part of the program right then and there. Having made that sane resolution I took up my gun and started out to find where that deer was going and what he was going there for. It was easy enough to tell that he had been along only a few minutes before my arrival for his tracks were as plain as text-book shorthand. I tried to guess what he was doing away up there in the clouds and could not solve the puzzle until the idea came to me that he wanted to look at the scenery. That deer had sound judgment; at any rate the tracks made for the point where he could get the best outlook and I followed them because of my orders, not from choice. By and by I came to a place where he had grown tired and lain down for a nap, sleeping until he heard me coming through the bushes. And that made me remember another piece of advice I had received when parting with my companion, it was this: "Go slow while the deer is walking, for you can tell how he is going by studying the tracks, and do not make a bit of noise, but when you jump



him, follow him just as fast as you can until he walks again." I tried to do as I was told, go slowly and not make any noise, but I did not succeed very well. I went slowly enough for I could not help it and I did not make so much noise as a boiler factory when business is brisk maybe, but how anybody could push through that tangle of fallen brush, briars, snow and dead leaves and not make any noise doing it was too many for me, especially in those boots, and then again I breathed so hard I could be heard a mile. There was one good thing about it, those cartridges did not jingle, that was one point in my favor, though to tell the truth if they had made a sound like a castanet that deer could not have heard it over and above the other noises I made.

Finally, as I say, I came to the place where that deer had lain down to snooze. Possibly he might not have heard the other racket I have spoken of, being asleep, but my nose had gotten thawed out by this time and needed attention; probably he heard that and it scared him; I do not wonder at it. At any rate something roused him from his slumbers and instead of being decent about it and waiting to have it out with me, he put his four feet together and made some kind of a motion with his body which landed him seven yards from the spot in one leap and he kept up that sort of thing for some time as the tracks in the snow plainly showed. Now it came to me all of a sudden, like a ray of light through a dark cloud, that it was the deer that did the jumping and not the hunter, that "jumping a deer" was a term belonging to the business and that the hunter

did not have to exert himself; I was glad of this and saw no reason why I could not follow out the rest of the program all right. By the time this got through my head that deer could have been half way to Canada at the rate he started off but I went on after him, taking note of the fact that I did not need to be careful about noise until he commenced walking again. I felt better and pushed on as rapidly as possible but as for noise I could not see that I made any more now that I hurried than I did formerly when I went slowly. That four-legged outcast went over the top of the mountain we were on and half way down on the other side and I after him until I found where he had become hungry and stopped to scrape the snow off something edible. Here again he heard my fairy footsteps I suppose, for he jumped once more, this time about twenty-five feet, and was off and away down into the valley. It was easy, as I have said, for me to throw those boots down hill and I rather think I pushed my antlered friend a bit, for at the foot of the next mountain he jumped again and took the elevator for the top story as before. I followed and I not only followed but I kept following for more than ten miles and my companion afterwards told me that probably that deer was never so far in advance of me but he could have sworn to my identity in any court of law in the land. Finally the day began to be warm—I had been so for some time; the temperature began to go up and with the rise came a Scotch mist which covered the mountain like a blanket. It was so dark that I could not see any object with certainty for more than a hundred feet and

as that deer still seemed to scorn my society and refused to remain for an interview, I got real mad. I said, "Here I have been chasing you for four hours, first up hill and then down dale, and I have tried in every way I know to get a chance to speak to you. I have not harmed you at all—it was not my fault, I will grant that, but it is so all the same. If you have not enough courtesy in you, to let up on that jumping business, I am done. I am going to bid you a fond farewell and you may go wherever you are going or to Halifax for all of me." Then I turned and started right back for the abandoned farm.

That is what I thought I did. I was told later that what I should have done was to follow my own tracks backward, but I did not have sense enough to do that; I thought it would be much easier to take a short cut. I ought to have known better for I have seen a good many short cuts made in my business and they nearly always proved disastrous to the fellow who took that road. It was dark and gloomy and damp and at every twist and turn the landscape took on a ghostly and unnatural aspect. I stumbled along noisily because I had gotten through deer hunting for that day and noise was no bar to my progress, when all of a sudden I found that I was climbing a mountain where no mountain ought to be. This took my wits away and bothered me so much that I sat down on a rotten stump to think it over. I have been in the woods many times but never in any like that where the very hills got up and marched from place to place at the slightest notice or with no notice at all. The mountain I was on ought not to be

there and I was certain of it and peering through a break in the mist I could see another peak, just ahead of me, a new one which had gone over there from somewhere else during the morning. Then it came over me that maybe I was lost but I was ready for that; I carried a pocket compass and I pulled it out and opened it. Here was a still greater mystery; for some unknown reason that compass pointed in exactly the wrong direction and all the shaking and pounding I could give it did not make it mend its manners. That was a stunner, for when one pins his faith to a watch or a time-table or a compass and any one of them goes back on him he weeps and has occasion for doing so. I was about to shy that compass over the nearest precipice when the thought came to me that having bought the thing from a reputable firm in New York it was up to me to follow its orders and then when I got back home to carry it to the chap from whom I bought it and demand the return of my money with whatever of sarcasm and reproach I could bring to bear on him at the moment. So I started out the way it pointed and after wandering around in regions as new to me as the Cape of Good Hope I suddenly came upon the foot-bridge over the river opposite the abandoned farm from whence I had started in the morning. I was tired and hungry and we had left our lunch in the barn, but my companion had reached the place before I did, so I had to keep my appetite for the supper awaiting us when we got back to the farm.

While riding home I described my adventures as well as I could and my companion got very excited over it all and

said, "We will get an early start to-morrow and we will begin where you left off and follow that deer until we get him." I told him that nothing would please me better, that I had not enjoyed myself so much for a couple of years past, but I had stuffed so much sport into that one day that I did not really feel the necessity for any more for at least another decade and that if the lust for hunting came upon me in the meantime I would recall these adventures and exercise my imagination.

Looking back over my essay at deer hunting I can see many things to be grateful for. In the first place I was able to return that rifle to my friend without having to go to the trouble of cleaning it and as there had been no wear and tear on it he charged me no rent, there is something in that. Then again I used none of those valuable cartridges; I have them yet and there are enough of them to last me a century I judge. And I also have that compass; when I got home I started down town intending to return it to the man who sold it to me and get my money back but after thinking the matter over I decided to give it another chance; I will take it down on the lower East Side and see if it will pilot me safely home, if it does so I will forgive it. My boots and red hat I left up in the country; the boots were in fine condition but I had an idea they might cause remark if I wore them on Broadway, although they would be mighty handy in the subway to keep people off my corns; maybe I will send for them later. As for the red hat, I hated to part with it but a red hat does not harmonize with my complexion so that is probably a total

loss. The sheepskin vest I offered for sale at a reduced price and could probably have realized something on it but it suddenly struck me that there were certain persons to whom I would like to loan it. My companion said if I wore it I would be shot full of holes and if the persons to whom I refer will borrow it, one after another, I shall be more than pleased to risk the vest, in fact there are one or two who can have it as a gift—first come first served—there is no choice so far as I am concerned. Of course, I hate to spoil a perfectly good vest like that, but I don't want to be selfish in the matter and am willing to make the sacrifice under the circumstances.













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